

Message Text

SECRET

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67

ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 IO-10 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 INRE-00

USIE-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 ACDA-05 MC-02

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O R 141530Z OCT 75

FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4402

INFO AMEMBASSY GUATEMALA IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE

AMEMBASSY MEXICO

USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

USCINCSO 0001

S E C R E T BELIZE 0670

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PBOR PFOR GT BH

SUBJECT: MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS IN BELIZE

REF: STATE 241253

1. BRITISH GARRISON COMMANDER, COL DUNCAN GREEN, INVITED ME TO LUNCH AT AIRPORT CAMP YESTERDAY (OCT 13) TO DISCUSS RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN MILITARY SITUATION IN BELIZE AND ACROSS THE BORDER.
2. THE THREE PUMA TROOP CARRYING HELICOPTERS (REFTEL) ARRIVED OCT 12 (ABOARD SIX C-130S) AND THE FIRST OF THESE HAD BEEN ASSEMBLED AND WAS TO BE TESTED YESTERDAY AFTERNOON. OTHER TWO EXPECTED TO BE READY IN NEXT DAY OR TWO.
3. ADDITIONAL MILITARY PERSONNEL REQUIRED TO OPERATE AND MAINTAIN THESE HELICOPTERS (ABOUT FIFTY, ACCORDING TO COL GREEN) HAD ALSO ARRIVED.

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4. GARRISON WAS ON "PRACTICE ALERT" OVER WEEKEND WITH MOBILE ANTI-

AIRCRAFT GUNS IN EVIDENCE AROUND AIRPORT. COL GREEN EXPLAINED THAT DRILLS OF THIS SORT WERE ROUTINELY HELD FROM TIME TO TIME, BUT CONCEDED THAT IN THIS CASE HE HAD BEEN MINDFUL OF POSSIBILITY GUATEMALANS MIGHT MISINTERPRET ARRIVAL OF LARGE CARGO CARRYING AIRCRAFT AS MAJOR TROOP REINFORCEMENT AND REACT IRRATIONALLY. HE HAD JUST LEARNED THAT LT COL CASTELLANOS, THE GUATEMALAN CONSUL GENERAL, HAD BEEN SEEN AT AIRPORT OCT 12 BUSILY SNAPPING PICTURES AND SAID IF HE HAD KNOWN ABOUT IT SOONER HE WOULD HAVE OFFERED HIM A GUIDED TOUR.

5. ABOVE ACTIVITIES HAVE SUPPLIED AMPLE GRIST FOR LOCAL RUMOR MILLS, ALL OF WHICH HAVE BEEN IN ABUNDANT PRODUCTION LATELY. A NEIGHBOR SOLEMNLY ASSURED US YESTERDAY THAT THERE WERE 30,000 GUATEMALAN TROOPS MASSED ON THE BORDER AND THAT A BRITISH EXPEDITIONARY FORCE WAS BEING BROUGHT IN TO DEAL WITH THIS THREAT. COL GREEN, INCIDENTALLY, SAID HE WAS UNAWARE OF ANY FURTHER AUGMENTATION OF GUATEMALAN FORCES ALONG BORDER BEYOND INCREASES REPORTED EARLY IN SEPTEMBER BUT NOTED THAT FOUR FIELD ARTILLERY PIECES NOT PREVIOUSLY SEEN HAD TURNED UP IN LA POLVORA LAST WEEK.

6. AS FOR RECENT MILITARY DEVELOPMENTS ON GUATEMALAN SIDE, COL GREEN SAID TWO PATROL CRAFT ENROUTE TO PUERTO BARRIOS VIA PANAMA CANAL WOULD ARRIVE IN NEXT DAY OR TWO BRINGING TOTAL IN PUERTO BARRIOS UP TO TWELVE WITH ONLY ONE REMAINING IN PACIFIC BASE IN SAN JOSE. ALSO FIRST OF THE ARAVAS HAD ARRIVED BUT HE ASKED ME IF I KNEW WHEN THE OTHERS WERE DUE TO ARRIVE (I DID NOT). GOG HAD RECENTLY RECEIVED SHIPMENT OF FIVE THOUSAND CARBINES FROM UNNAMED SUPPLIER CONSEQUENTLY HE WAS COMPLETELY BAFFLED BY REPORT THEY HAD ASKED US TO APPROVE PURCHASE IN US OF AN ADDITIONAL 15,000.

7. MEANWHILE, DOWN SOUTH IN PUNTA GORDA, BRITISH FORCES HAVE TAKEN OVER DRILL HALL PREVIOUSLY USED BY BELIZEAN HOME GUARD, AND AN INFANTRY PLATOON IS NOW INSTALLED THERE. PATROLLING OF ROADS, TRAILS AND STREAMS IN TOLEDO HAS BEEN APPRECIABLY STEPPED UP AND COLONEL THOUGHT CHANCES OF GUATEMALANS BEING ABLE TO MAKE SURPRISE LODGMENT IN SOUTHERN BELIZE HAD THEREBY BEEN SIGNIFICANTLY REDUCED.

8. AS FOR LOCAL ATTITUDES, INDIAN VILLAGES IN TOLEDO HAD WARMLY
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WELCOMED BRITISH SOLDIERS. PRO-GUATEMALAN SENTIMENT LIMITED TO SMALL NUMBER OF BUSINESSMEN IN PUNTA GORDA AND SEEMED TO BE MORE INDICATIVE OF FEELING OF NEGLECT BY GOB THAN ANY REAL ENTHUSIASM FOR AFFILIATION WITH GUATEMALA.

9. COMMENT. COL GREEN, A MAN OF INDOMITABLE GOOD NATURE SEEMED IN ESPECIALLY HIGH SPIRITS YESTERDAY. HE WAS OBVIOUSLY MUCH RELIEVED TO HAVE AT LEAST PARTIALLY REMEDIED THE POTENTIALLY EMBARRASSING

VULNERABILITY TO UNDETECTED GUATEMALAN INCURSIONS WHICH UNTIL
RECENTLY HAD CHARACTERIZED THE UK POSITION IN THE SOUTH.
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